

September 1992

approach

The Naval Aviation Safety Review

CV/LSO Issue

Morgan Tan Wilbur



Aviating 101 Final Exam



While looking through this issue, I became disturbed. I don't mean mentally unstable. Although I'm sure there are many people who feel I'm slightly off-center. I think uneasy is probably a better description.

In over a year I've read hundreds of submitted stories to produce 15 issues of *Approach*. The stories have been funny, frightening, and a few of them a bit ridiculous. There have been well-written stories and stories that massacred the written word. Regardless, everyone of them was true.

I'm proud of this publication. Unfortunately, I sense that I may be repeating myself. Repeating the same "Gee, I really wish I hadn't done that" stories. I often wonder what

effect *Approach* has on aviators.

You're sitting in the ready room, flight boots propped up on the chair in front of you, reading *Approach*. Does it occur to you that the guy you're reading about was probably doing the same thing before his little adventure?

Have you ever wondered who are these people and why do bad things happen to them? Were they born under the wrong star? Did they offend the bernoullies? Or did they just forget some basic tenet of flight?

I've spoken to many of the authors of those stories. I like them. They've got the courage to tell their tales; often at the risk of looking bad. I wonder what their motivation is.

Sometimes it's punishment. Much like writing "I will not depart

the airplane during ACM" 100 times on the blackboard.

Sometimes it's for a fitrep bullet or the squadron is competing for the safety "S". I really hate that. The squadron sends in a bushel of stories. Usually out of 15 stories there might be one worth printing. JOs don't write well when the ASO locks them in the ready room.

The best stories come from the flyers who hope that another aviator might learn from their mistakes. It's like stealing a peek at the final exam of experience. That way you get the lesson before the test.

Steve Halsted

approach

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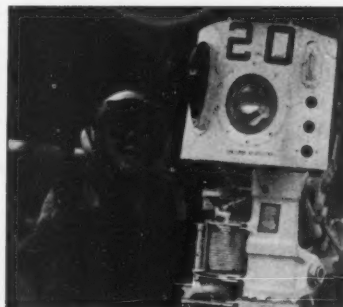
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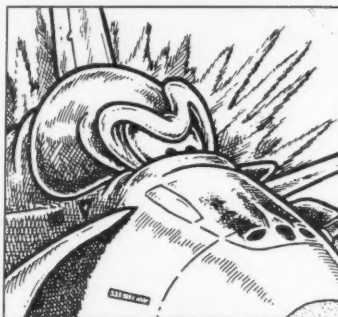
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No

By Lt. Leo Batfish

✓ **Radio,**

2

✓ **TACAN,**

✓ **Brains.**



Let's Go Flying!

Get-home-itis is like hypoxia: by the time you realize you've got it, it's too late. We manned up for the squadron fly-off after a seven-month deployment. As one of the junior pilots, I was assigned to fly a tanker instead of a bomber. We reviewed the aircraft discrepancy book and saw that the mounting bracket that supported the TACAN had broken on the previous flight, so the mechs had removed the unit.

"Not a problem," I thought. "We still had our Omega navigation system." The weather was great, and best of all, we were Dash 4 in a division. I felt we were good to go. My navigator agreed.

I also noticed a gripe on the UHF radios regarding intermittent transmit and receive, which the maintenance controller assured me was in work and would be repaired in time for the launch.

We arrived at the aircraft to find two technicians working in the cockpit on the radio. We thought little of it and continued with our preflight. With our walk-around completed and 30 minutes before the scheduled launch, the technicians told us that the radios still didn't work and needed a little more work. We remained optimistic and stowed our gear in the aircraft. Besides, a tanker can easily get off the deck in five minutes with an expeditious start.

The maintenance department worked a miracle and soon we were starting engines and looking forward to getting home to our families. As we completed our final checks we tried a radio check with one of the other aircraft in the flight. Nothing. We tried the tower and several other frequencies. No joy.

We summoned the troubleshooters. They worked feverishly replacing radios, control boxes and fuses as we watched our squadronmates launch. Our aircraft was still NORDO, so we shut down. We returned to the ready room disappointed.

We were soon joined by two more of our squadron aircrew whose aircraft had gone down for a bad constant-speed drive and starting unit. Oh well, 13 of 15 were airborne and two would try again later that day. My BN jokingly thanked the other crew for going down because we needed to fly on their wing to get home.

Maintenance repaired our radios later in the day. However, the other aircraft was still having problems. Looking at an hour-and-a-half flight, we decided that if we could not launch by 1600 we would wait until the next day. The time came and went and we were still on the boat, resigned to spending another night eating sliders while the rest of the squadron was at home with their loved ones. To say we were disappointed would have been an understatement.

All four aircrew spent a mostly sleepless night as each repeatedly checked with maintenance about the status of the aircraft. The ship scheduled a 0900 launch. We briefed and were ready to go before 0700. The man-up went smoothly and we were completing our post-start checks when the radios failed again. This time there was apparently no power to either radio and the troubleshooter quickly repaired the problem. The fuses in the bottom of each radio had blown, probably because of a power surge when transferring to internal power. An uncommon occurrence, but not unheard of.

We taxied toward the catapult with the radios once again operational. We asked to wait until the other A-6 was ready to launch, because of our limited ability to navigate and the need to fly on his wing. The delay was approved and maintenance estimated five minutes before he would be ready.

A few minutes had passed when we noticed the deck crew removing the chains from the other aircraft.

"That's strange," I thought. "Normally we should have heard an 'Up and ready' call to the Air Boss or a call on base frequency that they were ready to go." I looked down: the radios had failed again. Once again, we called for a troubleshooter to replace the fuse. He fixed the problem and as he was reinstalling the radios I jokingly asked if I could have some extra fuses. Repairs complete, I said to my BN, "Let's get this thing off the deck before they quit again." He agreed. We surely didn't want to ride the ship into port and have to crane the aircraft off the carrier. 3

We gave a thumbs-up to the yellowshirt. Wipeout complete, I saluted the cat officer and we were airborne...finally.

"Suspend cat 3, suspend, suspend!" After a brief conversation with the other aircraft, we realized that they were still having some kind of generator or CSD problem and it would be at least 30 minutes before they could get airborne. Fuel wasn't a problem since we were a full tanker. We could easily hold overhead Mother for an hour and still make the flight home. We told the ship that we would remain overhead and wait for our playmate. Our TACAN still didn't work. As a result we had to keep the ship in sight; of course, a cloud layer prevented us from climbing higher than 10,000 feet to save fuel.

The next 30 minutes passed quickly as we discussed our options and where we would go if the other aircraft did not get airborne. There was an NAS nearby, only 150 miles east of our current position. Whidbey was about an hour-and-a-half to the northeast, or there was always Mother and sliders. Since the weather at Whidbey had been forecast with a 5,000-foot overcast and the local air



PH1 Michael D.P. Flynn

station was only eight miles from a major commercial airport, we decided that the carrier would be our best alternative.

We called the ship, but our radios had failed once again. We changed our IFF to 7700/7600 to let the ship know our status.

4 I began a descent as my BN used his PRC-90 emergency radio to communicate for the recovery. Regaining comms with the ship on Guard, they told us that the other aircraft was up and would be launching momentarily. A sense of relief came over me as I watched the other A-6 taxi to the cat. As I came up behind the ship on my second orbit he launched and we immediately joined. We climbed out and headed north. I held up my PRC-90 and gave the lead a thumbs-up. He acknowledged and switched us to the backup frequency. Settling down for a long, quiet flight home I checked my aircraft to see if anything else had gone wrong. Everything looked good, except I was a little lower on fuel than expected. We had enough to make it to Whidbey, but without much of a reserve cushion. My BN and I agreed that enough had gone wrong already today and we were not going to chance something else happening.

We told lead about our fuel state and of our wish to get our aircraft on deck for repairs. We turned east for the local NAS. Approaching the coast, we saw a low overcast layer obscuring the area.

"This is all I need," I thought, "a section approach down to IFR minimums in a NORDO aircraft without navigation aids." I can only imagine what was going through my BN's mind.

Switching back to Guard on the PRC-90, we got a

radio check with approach control. From there, things finally started to go our way. We broke through the thin overcast at approximately 2,000 feet AGL, spotting the field at about 10 miles. Arriving for a normal overhead VFR pattern, we watched while our lead made a touch-and-go, the signal clearing us to land, and tower showed us the green aldis lamp. We went to the transient line, happy to be safe on deck.

After a three-hour delay for repairs, we filed our flight plan and were airborne again for home. This time before launching, we made sure the TACAN was repaired and operating by checking the radios with several agencies. An hour-and-a-half later, after individual precision approaches and breaking out at 300 feet, we were on deck at Whidbey.

Should we have launched from the carrier? In retrospect, no. The aircraft was "legally up" just prior to launch since the UHF radios were working. The Omega was working and we did have an ADF. However, there was reasonable certainty that the radios would not last the entire flight. Had this been a night or bad-weather flight the aircraft would have been down. Get-home-itis, relying on another aircraft and sunny weather, and a we-can-hack-it attitude placed a conscientious aircrew in a dangerous situation. The outcome could easily have been an aircraft mishap report.

Stop when you hear yourself say, "It's not a problem. It's only a ..." or "We can do without that. Lead will..." Put yourself in the worst-case scenario with nobody to help you and ask if you really want to take the aircraft. Is it really "up" and ready to fly? There's rarely a need to accept anything less than a fully mission-capable aircraft. ◀

Lt. Batfish is an A-6 pilot with VA-95.

I launched off the CV into the standard black hole. I couldn't see the horizon, but my HUD gave me an attitude reference as I climbed away from the water. With my gear and flaps up and my aircraft climbing, my pucker factor decreased. Just about the time that my heart rate returned to normal, my INS failed. My eyes got a little bigger, and my heart missed a beat before accelerating to warp 8 as I sucked down half of my LOX bottle.

I had plenty of altitude below me and a good standby attitude indicator. I started to calm down and began the task of getting my INS attitude back through an inflight alignment. I wasn't feeling too antsy during this process because I had been successful in the past in getting the INS back on line. However, as this flight progressed, I realized that this time was going to be different; my inflight alignment was not working.

Searching my memory banks, I stumbled upon some comforting information. I used to fly the A-7A and had numerous night CV landings without a HUD or a velocity vector from the INS. In this case though, I would still have a HUD. Thank goodness for modern technology!

I called the ship and told them to tell paddles that I would be making a "standby attitude approach." Normally, being a hacker, I might have waited until the ball call to tell the LSO of my plight. But this night, I had nothing else to do as I made big circles in the sky.

While in marshal, I once again called that I was going to make a standby attitude approach. Was this too much whining for a guy who had flown previous night passes without a HUD?

As I pushed out of marshal, I began to focus on my approach. I flew everything by the numbers down to 1,200 feet. I reset my radar altimeter to 400 feet to coincide with the altitude I would be at for calling the ball. This was going to be easy!

At 10 miles, I dirtied up. At six miles, I slowed to on-speed. Piece of cake! I was now flying another routine

night approach. I concentrated on the waterline symbol that had replaced my velocity vector on the HUD. I was breathing fairly easily as I tried to relax for the final portion of the approach. I looked out the front and picked up the lights of the carrier. I couldn't discern any useful information about glideslope or line up, so I went back to my instruments and the HUD to make sure I was on the correct final bearing and that I was staying on speed.

"At four miles, you are low!"

That emphatic call from paddles grabbed my attention. My first thought was in the form of a question: Who is he yelling at? Then, I realized he was yelling at *me*. I quickly glanced at my altitude and saw 450 feet on the radar altimeter. I smoothly applied mil power and back stick, and saw that my rate of descent was more than 1,000 fpm.

Now my heart really took off. To say I was flustered is an understatement.

My wrestling match to get the jet under control was short-lived, but I was rapidly approaching the CV and I was nowhere near glideslope. With my trusty steed under control (and almost 600 feet below where I belonged), I vowed to get aboard on this pass, but paddles had other

ideas. He ended my roller coaster ride by sending me around.

I took this opportunity to review what I had done wrong, let my heart decel, and thank my lucky stars that paddles had the situational awareness to make that call.

Once aboard and back in the safety of the ready room, I reviewed the flight. Although I never checked it out, to this day I believe

that I can attribute my survival to the link made from me to the LSOs by the Strike controller and the marshal controller. They told paddles that I would not be flying with a full-up system. Paddles alertly made a four-mile save.

Cdr. Stearns is the CO of VFA-146.

A Four-Mile Save By Cdr. Greg Stearns



Pros of the Week

DELTA SIERRAS OF THE CRUISE

By Lt. Pat Graham

Just like in the simulator, a good datum at takeoff, a full load of buoys and a ship that could do LAMPS/ship-ASW, the classic SH-2F hop. The sun was slowly falling in the west but would give us enough light to ease into what was going to be a dark night. The seas were a little rough, but hey, we were flying off an FFG-7 class; they all rock and roll like that.

At launch time the exercise submarine had given away its location 20 miles from the ship. My crew had a thorough brief and we were good at this ASW stuff. After all, I was the det maintenance officer, a HAC and functional check pilot with one long cruise behind me. If I couldn't get a submarine now, it was time to look for a new job. With the H2P in the right seat and me in the left seat, we were off to deal simulated death to the enemy below. Unfortunately, on that evening we would never get to demonstrate our submarine hunting prowess.

On takeoff, the helicopter didn't quite respond as it should have. When we stabilized in a hover over the flight deck, the cyclic (for you stiff-wingers, that's the one in the middle) wasn't in the correct position for a hover. It was displaced a couple of inches to one side. After I disengaged the automatic stabilization equipment (ASE) the airplane responded correctly to cyclic input. I reengaged ASE with no problems.

We determined that the rough deck we had just left was the problem. If ASE is engaged without the aircraft being level it may effect the control positions in the air. ASE is a great system to have when flying around the ship. Besides, it is also required by NATOPS for any night flight over water. ASE smooths out all your control inputs and is the brains behind the "auto-pilot" in the H-2.

With that problem solved, we busted out to datum. We set the buoy patterns set in the TACNAV computer and were ready to begin the show. We didn't know, however, that a different type of show was about to begin.

My copilot started a turn and the helicopter tried to roll right on over. Aileron rolls are fun in the right airplane; the H-2 isn't one of them. After some quick work by my copilot to keep us from actually doing a roll, we ended up with both of us on the controls, straight and level, with both cyclics way over on the right side. They would have gone further if my leg hadn't been in the way.

Disengaging ASE, again, corrected the control problem and the helicopter responded properly to the cyclic's position. Of course, we now were flying ASE off. Time to go home. We called the ship and had them set emergency flight quarters. We knew that a flight deck with a lot of pitch and roll awaited us.

Unfortunately, H-2s have short legs, so anything like a bingo profile to the beach was just wishful thinking. We reengaged ASE to experiment with the severity of our problem. It turned out that even the smallest turn would send the helicopter reeling into another attempted aileron roll. We were resigned to the fact that our next landing would be without ASE. We told the ship about our situation. They began finding the steadiest deck they could. The flight deck was cleared of all but essential personnel, who knew that it wasn't the best time to be on the flight-deck team. Normally, an emergency of this nature isn't time-critical. We weren't running out of fuel, oil, or critical components. However, we were running out of one thing: a visible horizon.

"Pinky" time was beginning to disappear while we were still a few miles from the ship. The ship steadied on what was their best course for an ASE-off recovery. We set up in a starboard-to-port approach at one mile and 400 feet. Inside a quarter mile and 125 feet, we got the waveoff lights and had to take it around. My boss, the det OINC, had directed the waveoff. He was watching for us from the tower. The deck had exceeded pitch-and-roll limits.



So there we were: the horizon was quickly fading, the deck was at the edge of the envelope, and we didn't have complete control capability. There was nowhere left to go. We brought it around again and headed inbound. Neptune cooperated on this approach and we were able to put it in the circle and look like heroes. At least that's how we figured it. Later, to add credibility to our triumph over the wind, water, and faulty electronics, we were even selected as the AIRPAC Safety Pros of the Week.

And now, for the rest of the story (the part that was never written on any citation.) This was where it got really scary.

The det maintenance chief asked us to keep turning to assist the troubleshooters. We had recently lost some valuable troubleshooting time by shutting down before the maintenance guys could get a good look at things. Heck, since I was the maintenance officer, an FCF pilot and God's latest gift to naval aviation (by virtue of my just-demonstrated flight skills) I said, "Sure." Besides, there was nowhere else to go and that night's movie was no good anyway.

Our electricians diagnosed the problem as a faulty black box in the ASE. It took about 20 minutes for my

maintenance crew to locate the replacement black box and install it. Given a thumbs-up by the chief and his assurance that we were ready to go, we made the crucial mistake. We figured that we'd lift up in a hover, and everything would be all right. We'd step right back into the ASW problem without missing much.

My OINC agreed from the tower I could pick it up and check it out. The ship's CO, a super intelligent guy, also said, "If you think it's fixed, give it a go." I don't know how we fooled that many people including ourselves, but we did. Why would anybody even *think* of doing a controllability check at night, in rough weather, on an FFG? That hint of horizon we landed with had turned into the classic black night with *no* horizon.

We got a green deck from the tower and called for the removal of chocks and chains. I bet you're beginning to figure out what happened next.

We lifted up into a hover and the helicopter tried to run right into the hangar. With the cyclic again held hard against my leg to maintain a level attitude, I disengaged ASE and regained some control. Here we go again, another ASE-off landing on a lousy deck at night. You'd think I'd learned something the first time. After a lot of sweating, I was able to get the aircraft back on deck.

What a night! My crew and I had handled a difficult emergency and survived. Then, we put ourselves and everyone else on the flight deck right back into the same emergency situation. I guess our brains weren't working any better than the black box in the ASE. Later, when I was able to admit this to anyone, they always stood in wonderment of how we could have been so stupid.

I have my own theories. Were we feeling a little invincible? Sure. We'd just come through a tough one lookin' good and smelling like roses.

Did we succumb to our self-induced professional pressure to make that ASW commitment? You bet. We were tactical gods just waiting to be discovered by the CNO.

Did we fool the ship's CO into letting us do a delta sierra?

Yep. It backs up what they tell you in safety school: if it wasn't for pilot error, flying could be a whole lot safer. So, take a few words of advice from someone who knows better and was fortunate enough to live to tell the rest of the story. There's no reason to risk your own life, your crew, and all those hard-working guys on the flight deck because you got caught up in the pressure to be sierra hotel.

Remember, aviation is dangerous, much more dangerous if you're stupid.

Lt. Graham flew with HSL-37.



A Short Swim Before Dinner

By Lt. Mike Wettlaufer and Lt. Dave Roller

8 **We** led a two-plane into the break after an uneventful day-tanker mission during a transatlantic. We had completed our landing checks by the 90. We crossed the wake and picked up a high MOVLAS ball. We kept the power back to work down. We got the cut lights as we approached the centerline. As the ball centered, we brought the power up...then, *boom!*

Large black pieces shot out of the left intake and smoke filled the cockpit. We raised the gear, went to max power and rotated to stop our descent as all the waveoff lights came on.

We concentrated on keeping our dying aircraft airborne and away from the ship. A little left stick and a lot of yaw took us left of centerline. Now, airspeed was bleeding below 120 KIAS, and the nose was bunted to try to maintain flying speed.

The lens was to our right and there was a distinct negative feeling of "deck rush." As Mike pulled the stick back again, the left wing dropped and the nose fell.

"Eject, eject, eject!" Those were the only words time allowed as our F-4A-6D came apart. Six-and-one-half seconds after the initial explosion, we punched out.

The Intruder hit the water off the port side, next to the end of the angle deck. We both had enough time in our parachutes to inflate our LPUs, remove our masks, and find our koch fittings. Even though we were prepared, we had hurt our hands during the ejection. Fortunately, SEWARS and the FLU-8 took care of our chutes and one uninflated LPU lobe. We landed close to the ship and the helo arrived so quickly that we didn't need our rafts.

Although we were close to the

ship, we were also close to floating wreckage, along with heavy seas and foam. The helo crew had trouble locating our small reflective helmets; our green flight suits didn't help, either. We were 50 yards apart, splashing water and waving our arms.

The helo crew finally spotted us, and the SAR swimmer had both of us out of the water in eight minutes. He even rode up separately with each of us. We applied pressure bandages to the cuts on our hands and were quickly back onboard the ship.

Our reactions during the emergency came from experience, but our reactions during and after the ejection came from water-survival training, DWEST and NATOPS lectures. Knowing when to eject came from good briefings and crew coordination. We were able to get back for another wonderful meal in the wardroom.

Lt. Wettlaufer and Lt. Roller fly with VA-85.

NEVER ASSUME ANYTHING

By Lt. Dave Smith

You've heard that before; you'll hear it again. Can an assumption bite you on a land-ASAP emergency? Yes!

It was the middle of a six-month Mediterranean deployment. It was hump day and the air wing was looking good. The weather was CAVU, and our mission was a low-level strike—every Prowler pilot's favorite flight.

We launched and rendezvoused with the strike group. As the flight pushed for the entry point, my aircraft's left fuel-filter light came on. A fuel-filter light is a land-ASAP emergency in the EA-6B, which meant there would be no low-level strike for me today.

We declared an emergency, left the strike group and headed for the ship. We completed the checklists, told the LSOs about our problem and trapped with an OK 3-wire. Maintenance discovered an electrical glitch, fixed it and had the plane ready to fly the next day.

The crew launched, but 10 minutes later, the left fuel-filter light lit again. They declared an emergency and completed the checklists. This was getting old. After advising the ship and the LSOs, the crew trapped.

Again, maintenance discovered that the problem was not

the filter or fuel system, but a glitch in the electrical system. They repaired it and again, the plane was up for the next day.

The following day—you guessed it!—for the third consecutive time, the same light illuminated. This was getting ridiculous, even embarrassing. The crew assumed it was the same electrical problem. They grudgingly declared an emergency, completed the checklists and told the ship and LSOs.

With the Prowler on short final, the deck was still fouled. The LSOs let the aircraft press on to the normal waveoff window. They had to wave it off when the deck remained fouled. But they watched as the aircraft was very slow in accelerating and missed an inflight engagement by less than one foot! It was painfully obvious that the pilot was using only one throttle.

The fuel-filter checklist says to comply with the single-engine checklist. That means to use 20-degree flaps (the recommended setting for a single-engine approach) in case the corresponding engine flames out. The gray area lies in whether to use the affected throttle or to leave it at idle during the approach. The first two pilots had used both throttles. The third pilot used only one throttle, thus making it harder to wave off.

The near inflight engagement occurred because the aircrew failed to tell the LSOs everything about their situation. Just stating that they would be using the same configuration as the two previous emergencies wasn't enough, mainly because that information wasn't right. The aircrew assumed the LSOs knew how the aircraft was configured.

When coming aboard in a non-standard configuration, *always* tell the LSOs every detail so that there will be no doubt in anyone's mind. It doesn't matter if the same emergency has happened twice before. Let people know your exact situation and how you will fly your approach. ◀

Lt. Smith is a first-tour EA-6B pilot with VAQ-140.

PH1 Michael D.P. Flynn



Operational Necessity,



the BIG Picture

10

I had just completed my first night passenger transfer. All you fleet aviators out there are saying, "Gee, must have been something pretty extraordinary to justify a pax flight at night during peacetime." From the moment aviators hit the fleet two words—"operational necessity"—and their definition become part of the new crewmen's "aviator-speak".

The final authority on the rules and regulations by which aviators and surface warriors alike conduct helicopter operations at sea is NWP-42. The shipboard helicopter operations manual defines instances of operational necessity as "missions associated with war or peacetime operations in which the consequences of an action justify the risk of loss of aircraft and aircrew."

By Lt. Chris Neugebauer

A few chapters later, the good book warns, "Night helicopter passenger flights to or from air-capable ships shall be limited to situations of an operational necessity."

While we were on a battlegroup dusk patrol with our SH-60B, our ship told us that they needed a technician and vital parts picked up on the carrier. The technician had to fix a gunfire-control radar that would support a routine gunex and missile scheduled the next day at an eastern Mediterranean range.

Knowing that sunset was in 40 minutes, we hustled to the carrier. With a little luck and not too much time in starboard delta, this would be a routine pax transfer. Well, timing and luck were not to be ours.

After landing on the carrier, we told the Air Boss that we were going to have to leave the passenger behind because it was after sunset. The air transport officer (ATO) came out with the parts *and* the technician.

Our aircrewman said, "We can't take him; it's after sunset."

The ATO replied, "You've been directed to take him."

My OINC, the aircraft commander, adamantly told our aircrewman, "Tell him we're outta here, without the pax!"

As we flew back to our ship, we had the feeling that, "Hey, we gave it the old college try, but we did what was safe and what was right." Our feeling of satisfaction was soon interrupted when our ship informed us that this passenger was crucial.

As we landed aboard mother, the TAO said we had been directed to return to the carrier for the technician. We told our TAO that unless this was operational necessity, we were shutting down and calling it a night.

"It's just been declared operational necessity," the TAO replied.

My OINC and I looked across the cockpit at each other and just shook our heads. After we discussed it between ourselves, we told the TAO we'd be lifting and to get us an overhead time.

When we checked in with the Boss and told him we were inbound, he exclaimed, "My unit? I thought you guys couldn't carry passengers at night!"

I said, "It's operational necessity, Boss."



After an awkward pause he rogered us and told us to take starboard delta. Following a long wait in starboard D, we shot two CCAs, waving off from our first because the E-2 in front of us bolted. After we recovered, we loaded our passenger and finished the night with an uneventful flight back to mother.

Incidentally, after we shut down we were informed that the inoperative system had been repaired and our incredibly important passenger was no longer needed. On top of that, the missile was scrubbed the next day!

Did the HAC and I agree that this was a justifiable case of operational necessity from the start? No. Then why did we agree to do something that we believed was blatantly against NWP-42? Someone else made the call that it was operational necessity, but as the aircraft commanders, we always have the final call when it comes to the safety of our crew and aircraft (and our passengers).

As we discussed whether or not we would still do the mission after being told it was operational necessity, we thoroughly evaluated all the factors that could bear upon its outcome. The aircraft was flying great, the crew was alert and well-rested, the sea state was low, there was a bright moon illuminating the horizon, we had plenty of gas and the carrier was only 15 miles away.

If any of these circumstances had been different we might have said, "Thanks, but no thanks," and taken the heat.

A recent COMNAVAIRLANT directive says that "operational necessity during peacetime operations should be limited to extreme situations." If an instance like this occurs without discussion and reevaluation, next time, a similar or less critical mission might be declared operationally necessary during routine peacetime operations. ◀

Lt. Neugebauer flies with HSL-42's Det 10 onboard USS *John Hancock* (DD-981).

Winnie the Pooh Takes a COD Flight

By Cdr. Brian Roby

I was a newly designated plane commander in the C-1A Trader, the carrier onboard delivery (COD) aircraft. The weather was great as I drove to the base for a Saturday logistics flight to a carrier. I would be flying with another junior plane commander whose experience level matched mine.

I was usually apprehensive because I knew that these tired old workhorse C-1s could test my knowledge of emergency procedures when I least expected it.

12 When I got to the hangar, I learned that my overhead time had been moved up an hour. This only meant that we would now have to move a little faster and omit some of the "unnecessary" preflight items. The calm feeling I had of sharing responsibility with a peer made me feel bulletproof.

My fellow plane commander and I decided that he would file the flight plan and I would go right to maintenance control, sign for the aircraft and do the preflight. Once our hasty plans were set and we had briefed, we went our separate ways.

We met back at the aircraft, got into our S-2 life vests and manned up. Getting in was difficult because the mail was blocking the main cabin door. We had to enter through the overhead hatch just forward of the wing. This gymnastic drill was even harder because more mail aft of the center of gravity brought the nosewheel off the ground by a foot. The old horse seemed to be sitting down on the job.

With the engines turning at 25 inches of manifold pressure, and with our three-man crew onboard, if the nose didn't fall through, we would have to reload. Start-up was normal and the nose did fall through. We completed the weight and balance, and no repositioning was needed.

I'm sure we commented repeatedly about what a great day it was for flying. The cold R-1820s sputtered and

complained about turning over in the thick air, but then the familiar sound of pounding pistons combined with the usual smoke filling the air. The additional static thrust brought our nosewheel to the ground and we taxied, well pleased with our display of can-do spirit.

As we taxied, we realized that we hadn't called the terminal to see if our passengers were ready for their brush with history in a C-1A. We found one fearless individual ready to strap into the only seat unencumbered with mail bags and boxes.

As we taxied up, our passenger walked out, eager and ready...until he saw our old COD. We shut down so that we could hoist him up through the hatch. However, he had lost all enthusiasm for the flight when he realized how we would have to get his 280-pound frame through the open hatch. We all got out to help, and we were eventually able to load him.

Actually, things worked out well in two areas. He would be able to meet his ship, and his weight improved our center of gravity: our nosewheel now touched the ground without the benefit of turning engines. Emergency egress procedures? Well-l...after all, the mail must get through!

We launched, and everything seemed fine except that one crewman saw our passenger was pretty nervous. The crewman finished his inflight safety brief (he couldn't finish it on the ground because he was out of breath of stuffing our rider into the airplane).

We also discovered that this was the first time our passenger had been in an airplane without stewardesses or inflight meals! The crewman continued his brief, but nothing seemed to calm the passenger.

The view was astounding as we flew to the coast, over a large city, and headed for the carrier some 200 miles offshore. We'd make our overhead easy.

One hundred miles off the coast, we smelled smoke in

the cockpit. We called a crewman on the ICS.

"Do you smell something burning?"

"Yes," he replied quickly.

This was the last time we'd be able to talk to him for a long time because he disconnected his helmet to fight the fire. We ran through our procedures and turned off the generators. The voltage regulator just forward of the aircrewman's seat had arced and set fire to the crewman's seat.

The amount of oil in the seat cover left little resistance and the fire completely burned the covering off, then started on the aircraft's interior insulation. When we heard the hand-held fire extinguisher discharge we pushed the cockpit door open to see what was happening. Remember, we couldn't communicate with the crewman.

Smoke poured into the cockpit and I could see flames on the overhead running down to the floor. Seconds after we opened the door, our nervous passenger decided his hot, smoky corner wasn't safe and moved into the cockpit, rear end first.

My copilot and I were pinned to the sides of the cockpit without being able to see each other. We declared an emergency with the ship and prepared

for a possible ditching.

The carrier launched an alert fighter to act as on-scene commander. The flames continued and we descended for what seemed to be our only option. We only had time to make a good once-over of our survival gear while the crewman fought the fire. Neither one of us had anything in our water bottles. We probably should have looked before we left. Next we had to forcibly remind our passenger to take his seat. I knew that even if we ditched successfully with this rotund person in the cockpit, the impact, no matter how slight, would make us the envy of people who pack sardine cans!

The crewman fought the fire with some of the boxes, which included Christmas presents. About seven minutes after the fire started, it was down to smoke. We had turned the aircraft back toward the coast, hoping to set up for an emergency landing.

We finally got our passenger to take his seat, and we recovered uneventfully. The smoke had significantly diminished, but we tried to make an emergency egress anyway. Our passenger was the first one out of the overhead hatch. I'm sure we looked like Tigger and Rabbit trying to push Winnie the Pooh out of Rabbit's hole after the bear had eaten all the

"hunney." Pretty embarrassing.

Believe it or not, we finished the same mission two days later, but

we did a lot of things differently; our passenger, however, refused to try again. We couldn't blame him.

This story is a few years old, but the lessons are still current. At least I can smile about it.

Cdr. Roby flies E-2Cs with VAW-117.



We were anxious to make our first flyoff to NAF Atsugi, our new home. We wanted to show off our F-14s to the Japanese. An F/A-18 squadron, experienced in flying from Atsugi, would brief and lead us in.

They told us about the field, runways, taxiways and local ATC procedures. For some of us, this would be our first flight into foreign airspace, a major change from good, ol' "Fightertown USA." Atsugi only has a single runway slightly less than 8,000 feet long. One point got our attention: if we had to take the gear, it would close the field for 10-15 min-

utes while it was re-rigged.

We expected VMC and we covered the VFR pattern and geographic references. We reviewed TACAN and PAR approaches, and divert fields. There was an Air Force base 20 miles north of Atsugi that would be our primary divert.

After launch, we formed up on our Hornet lead and headed out. Everything went fine until we were about 70 miles from the NAF. We were flying through cumulus buildups and it looked like the field would be IMC, something we really didn't want to contend with on our first time in-country.

By Lt. Bill Muscha

I'll Be Down to Meet You in Atsugi, Honey



Approach advised us of delays and gave us holding instructions. Listening to the radio, we knew that other aircraft from our air wing were also holding. We began watching our fuel.

We had orbited for 15 minutes when approach said that an F-14 had blown a tire and slid off the side of the runway. They also said that if we had doubts about being able to stop on the runway, we should divert.

"No problem for us," we thought, "must have been from our sister squadron. We can stop on the runway."

Finally, approach gave us vectors out of holding to start our approach. Our fuel state was 8.5 (below max-trap fuel weight), and we decided not to dump.

Approach turned us over to the final controller for our GCA. We felt pretty good that we understood the Japanese controller's English, which was undoubtedly better than our Japanese. We followed his excellent glideslope and lineup calls and broke out above minimums. The runway was wet and it was raining. Wonderful!

We touched down, and I checked for the spoilers, which all worked fine. The antiskid seemed to be working as I called out airspeeds.

"Tower, 212, GCA rollout." No answer.

"Tower, 212, GCA rollout."

As we passed the long-field arresting gear, we realized that we were not slowing down. My pilot deselected antiskid; it makes the brake system ineffective below 15 knots.

Horried, we realized that we weren't going to stop on the runway. My pilot kept us pointing straight ahead as we passed our sister

squadron's Tomcat, which was in the grass on the left side of the runway.

As we went off the end, we blew our left mainmount and skidded to a stop. The pilot shut down and we safed our seats. We got out, disappointed and embarrassed at the end of what should have been a great introduction to our new home.

As it turned out, our aircraft had sustained only a blown tire and a damaged auxiliary flap, hit by flying rubber. Luckily, we hadn't FODed the engines, and our maintenance department had the bird flying again within a week.

Our biggest lesson was that when you're landing at an unfamiliar field, and if you have any doubt about stopping at the long-field gear, put the hook down. It's a lot better to have everyone behind you wait a few minutes while the gear is re-rigged, than to close the field for the rest of the day.

We landed with 7,500 pounds of JP-5 and carrier-pressurized tires. If we had dumped to 6.0, we would have probably been able to stop on the runway. We still would have had enough fuel to make a bingo profile to a divert field 300 miles away.

Just because VMC is forecast, don't fail to extensively brief IFR procedures and bad-weather considerations at a new field. The last 1,000 feet of the runway was slick with rubber deposits, making traction almost negligible.

Later, we discovered that another crew from our squadron had landed earlier and had similar problems. They warned us to take a trap on squadron common, but we had dialed up our new base frequency and never heard their warning. ◀

Lt. Muscha is a RIO with VF-21.

*Horried,
we realized
that we
weren't going
to stop on
the runway.*

Our Steel-Deck Ice Capade Tryout

By Lt. Daniel Filer

PH1 William A. Shayka



My BN and I briefed for a low-level into Saudi Arabia. We hadn't had the pleasure of a day launch in weeks and we enjoyed the experience. As the yellowshirt signaled to our plane captain to break us down, we armed our seats and completed our cockpit checks.

A little power and we were on our way. The director signaled for a turn, but when I tapped the inside brake, I found the nosewheel steering was nearly useless.

We were well into the cruise, including six weeks of combat operations, and the nonskid was almost gone from the flight deck. The areas around cats 3 and 4 clearly showed the abuse of the last 120 days.

We eased on up to and through the "Y" gate on cat 3, stopping just short of the shuttle. We had another eight minutes until our scheduled launch, so I set the parking brake and dropped my feet to the deck.

"Looks like the captain's turning into the wind," my BN remarked. "We should be going soon."

"Yeah," I replied. "402's on cat 4. This will be a quick rendezvous."

Just then, as the ship continued its right turn in search of the wind, we started sliding across the cat track toward our wingman on cat 4. My feet flew up to the brake pedals as I felt for the brake handle. We kept swinging around until we were almost perpendicular to cat 3's track. The nosegear stayed straight and locked into the gate, but I was afraid that at any moment we would hit 402 on cat 4.

It all happened so fast, so unexpectedly. I wasn't sure what to do except keep holding the brakes. I wondered if I should add power and jump out of the gate. Were the people behind me, near the other A-6? Would I break loose and slide backward? Was there a scupper on the side of cat 4 that would stop me? We'd have to eject if we went over the edge backward.

Fortunately, we stopped without a collision. We were quickly chained and chocked as the ship rolled out of its turn. We sat there cocked sideways for everyone to see. The deck crew hooked a tiller bar to the nosewheel—which never left the gate—and the tow tractor pulled us out of our awkward position. Then, brownshirts escorted us with one end of their tie-down chains attached to our Intruder and the other end ready to slap into a padeye if we started sliding again.

We finally launched, enjoyed our low-level, and returned to the ready room with a lot of questions. The combination of little or no nonskid, oily tires, and the ship's turn caused our impromptu "steel-deck ice capade show." ◀

Lt. Filer flies with VA-155.

SMOKE in the Water

By Lt. Patrick J. Fitzgerald

We launched on a clear, sunny day to transfer our ship's CO to our battlegroup's carrier. We had two SH-60Bs for the event, our first formation flight in a week. This mission would also be our first two-plane operation from our new ship.

The tasking order, issued only the previous day, showed only our overhead plus a couple of CV helo operations; there wouldn't be any fixed-wing ops because of predicted bad weather. As we prepared to lift, we got word that the carrier had hastily scheduled a full day of flight operations because the weather had cleared. The carrier's schedule was passed over voice circuits with no follow-up message. Several F/A-18 practice bombing hops were included in the air plan, but we never got that information.

The first half of our flight went smoothly. We arrived at our overhead on time, and after a couple of laps in starboard delta (while the first CV cycle launched), we landed to let our skipper off.

We launched from the carrier and returned to *Bunker Hill* to refuel. As we neared the cruiser, we noticed several jets making low passes near our ship. Our CO had previously complained to CV operations about low passes while his ship's helicopters were flying. We reminded the jets that we were nearby and they climbed away. Each helo took on a full bag of gas and started the return trip to get the CO.

Everything was going great. Each pilot practiced formation maneuvers. After a crossover and a lead change, I found myself in the wingman's position. I looked ahead momentarily and saw a smoke in the water a mile ahead of me.

"Do you see that smoke?" I asked lead.

When a helo pilot sees a smoke in the water, he thinks of many things. First will probably be a SAR. Next, SAR training. (Helicopter pilots use smokes to mark positions and windlines for Doppler approaches.)

I asked the cruiser's ASAC (antisubmarine air controller) if he had any reports of downed aircraft, or if any CV helo was doing SAR training. Lead, who was up on LAMPS Mk III data link, also asked the same thing of the

ATACO (air tactical control operator). Neither controller knew of any downed aircraft or training. However, the ASAC reported two Hornets at 13,000 feet.

I asked the ASAC if there were any bombing exercises scheduled. At that time, I looked up and saw a splash followed by an explosion. By this time, the smoke was about one-half mile ahead of the lead aircraft. I called for him to "break right and buster." The ASAC ordered me to do the same.

Once we were clear of the smoke and bombs, we discussed the incident, trying to figure out how two aircraft with six sets of eyes and ears each, listening to two different controllers, managed to blunder into an aerial bombing exercise?

The first, and primary, link in the chain was the carrier adding a flight schedule by radio instead of hard copy. Flexibility is the key to naval flight operations, but there should always be a written schedule as a backup, especially if any of the events involve ordnance.

Second, our controllers were not paying strict attention to all the CV's events. Battlegroup air traffic control involves much more than simply vectoring aircraft smartly about; it includes having a clear picture of airborne dangers and conflicting events.

Both helicopters had been cleared direct to the carrier, both controllers knew that there Hornets overhead at 13,000 feet, but no one considered the F/A-18s' mission. The jet pilots were at fault for not thoroughly clearing the area before they dropped their ordnance. The day was sunny but there was a light layer of haze at 2,000 feet. The jets dropped their bombs on top of the smoke so they could obviously see the water. But they didn't see our helos. They probably knew we were in the area but perhaps assumed that we had been vectored clear.

The last link was our situational awareness. After seeing the jets, we could have asked for more information from our controllers. Why were the jets there? What was their mission and would it affect our mission? If we hadn't been alert, smokes in the water could have easily turned into smoke in the helos and helos in the water! ◀

Lt. Fitzgerald flies with HSL-47.

When Is a Question Not a Dumb Question?

By Ltjg. Mark Smith

I was nervous and anxious as I started my TA-4J Skyhawk's engine for my first CQ. I was Dash 4 in the second flight. I had never been to the ship before. During Intermediate Strike-Flight Training, I field qualified in the T-2 because there wasn't a deck available. My class was the first of several non-basic qualified classes; this flight would be our first real look at carrier aviation.

Takeoff and join-up from NAS Key West went smoothly as did our flight to the ship. We entered holding and settled into our briefed cruise positions waiting for our charlie time. After a few turns, we were given our signal charlie.

My first pass was normal for a student's first look at 80,000 tons of steel – lousy. I was surprised when I heard the Boss tell me to put my hook down. We had been briefed that we would have two touch-and-go's before the first trap.

I extended the hook and worked to stay ahead of the aircraft. Wow! This was a lot different than at the field and didn't look at all familiar. Concentrate! Past the 90 position, I picked up the ball. At last, something I recognized. Back inside – AOA, VSI, angle-of-bank, altitude, back outside. Where's the ball?

Intruders and Hornets had been spotted on the



PH11ACJ Scott M. Allen

side momentarily blocking my view of the ball (at the 45). Then, OK, I was a little high, small corrections because I was in close. Oh, man, I could almost feel the deck. Wham! Finally, my first trap.

I taxied across the foul line and was passed from one yellow shirt to another. I felt like a small piece in a very large jig-saw puzzle. I had heard how busy a flight deck was and this wasn't even close to real fleet activity.

Before too long I was taxied up to the cat 1 JBD. I was excited as the Scooter on cat 1 was thrown into the air and the JBD came down. This would be my first cat shot. Relax. Concentrate!

I followed the taxi director next to the JBD who tried to pass me to the next director. I didn't see a director at first, so I looked to my previous director who again passed me to the next director. Where was he? I couldn't believe how many guys there were out here. At the field there were never more than two. When I saw the cat 1 taxi director, a green shirt carrying the weight board appeared to his right. The gross-weight figure displayed was wrong. I tried to adjust the weight board while following the director's signals to line up on the cat. My taxi speed increased.

After a few seconds (that seemed like minutes) of a visual chewing-out from my director, I was inched forward to the shuttle. OK, settle down. Concentrate! I felt a bump and the nose came down at the same time the director gave me the hold-brakes signal. I wasn't sure which side of the shuttle I was on and was surprised to see the taxi director give a two-fingered run-up signal. I was anticipating a taxi-forward or a signal to take tension and add power.

When I didn't immediately respond with power, the director emphasized the power signal. I quizzically responded with a run-up signal of my own, as if to say, "Are you sure?" The director responded with a determined affirmative nod and a more deliberate run-up signal. I reacted to the misunderstanding by thinking, "Well, OK. Here goes..." I added a handful of power and instinctively scanned my engine instruments.

My next thought was, "Wait, this can't be right." Too late! The jet leaped over the shuttle, sending deck handlers in all directions. I slammed the throttle to idle, extended my speed brakes, and blew both tires stomping on the brakes. I pushed (and held) the nosewheel-steering button and kicked left rudder to head toward the remaining deck (instead of the blue wet stuff on my right side). I felt the jet lurch to the left as I continued to apply brakes and left rudder. The aircraft continued for a few feet as the nose wheel straightened (imagine my pucker factor), and then I put in right rudder. The Skyhawk stopped between the cat one and two tracks. Then I noticed the catapult officer on my left

emphatically giving the throttle back signal. I heard the Boss telling me to check that my throttle was back. Believe me, my throttle couldn't have been back any further.

I was towed to a spot by the island, chocked and chained. I secured the engine and climbed out only to find that my legs would barely sustain me. I spent three days onboard ship and discussed what had occurred with my LSO and the CNATRA det OINC. I meet with a couple of instructors and was relieved to find them very supportive, encouraging me to put this behind me and concentrate on the task at hand. The CNATRA OINC had an instructors meeting to discuss what had happened.


After my near mishap, I noticed the taxi directors were more patient.

Three other pilots (TA-4, A-6 and F/A-18) commented that the yellow shirts were more deliberate and seemed to anticipate misunderstandings. I don't think that the taxi directors did anything wrong; they were just not used to rookies.

I should have asked more questions during the CQ brief instead of being concerned about a couldn't-hack-it-image. I should have waited to correct the weight board and asked the Air Boss to clarify the power signal, instead of assuming he wanted a handful of power and trying to do it all myself. I hope that another wide-eyed student will ask a "dumb question" before doing something that might injure or kill.

Ltjg. Smith is assigned to OP-503. He will soon join VS-27 for FRS training.

*My first
pass was
normal for
a student's
first look at
80,000 tons
of steel –
lousy.*



Road Cut

By Cdr. David Rogers

It began as a typical carrier-based bombing hop. USS *Midway* (CV-41) was steaming toward a four-day port visit to Perth, Australia. Before the ship pulled in, the "powers that be" had scheduled a three-day exercise with the Australians, which included live bombing at one of their western ranges, Lancelin Target.

After three days of "catching up to PIM" (translate: no fly), we were anxious to get into the air. My pilot and I were scheduled for what any J0 crew would consider a dream hop: 12 live Mk-82s all to ourselves. This would be the first time in three months we had delivered live ordnance.

As we briefed, we decided on six high-dive deliveries of two bombs each. The weapons were fuzed with good old

mechanical Mk-904s and the range had plenty of old vehicles to roll in on. What could be easier?

The first ripple in our pond occurred during the CVIC brief when we found out that there were four A-7s scheduled for the same 30-minute block we had. No problem, they had to rendezvous and we didn't, so we figured we'd get there a good 15 minutes ahead of them and have plenty of time to ourselves.

The second ripple appeared as we read the aircraft discrepancy book in maintenance. The aircraft had not flown in six days, and had not been bombing in 10. The last two bombing hops had resulted in grossly short computer-generated releases in the straight-and-level mode, which the

AQs had been unable to duplicate. Not much history to go on, but it was VFR to the moon and we had our manual MIL setting.

Yet another surprise occurred shortly after launch (which went 15 minutes late). As soon as we got our bearings with our first position update, we discovered that the ship's real position was 75 miles farther west than what the ship's INS had given us. This made for a 290-mile transit to the target and meant that our already compressed TOT would probably become even tighter. Still, we pressed.

Approaching the target 45 minutes later, we checked in and received clearance onto the range. After an ID/clearing pass, we climbed up into the high-dive pattern to set up for our first run. At this very moment we heard the two sections of A-7s checking in requesting "Immediate clearance for one run, six Mk-82s each."

As time and fuel were getting short for everyone, we decided to make one run instead of six. After telling the A-7s we'd be clearing the range in two minutes and changing our switchology to deliver 12 bombs, we called, "In hot."

My pilot stepped the computer into "attack" and we entered the dive. After designating the target in the gunsight, he "committed" (a squeeze of the commit trigger in the Buffalo Jet enables the computer to send a release pulse to the armament system releasing the weapons) and began to pull the aircraft.

As the nose approached the horizon in the pull our "extensive" experience level told us something was wrong. (My pilot had about 250 A-6 hours; I had 400.) The bombs felt like they were still attached. I quickly glanced out my side and confirmed that thought with an expletive over the ICS. Approaching 40 degrees, nose up I reached up to secure the Master Arm and glanced out in horror as all 12 weapons came off the airplane!

"NF 503, we've got no spot down here, mate," the range observer called. Little did he know what had just happened. The serious consequences of the flight profile also escaped us "IO veterans" as we countered with, "Roger, Lancelin, we got a release but those'll be a little long."

An object that's lofted at 40 degrees and 500 knots from 8,000 feet travels more than just "a little long"—3.8 miles, to be precise. The time expansion, which occurred during the 29-second fall was sufficient to convince us that those 82s must have dudded (and that there was, indeed, a God).

Just then, we heard the range controller report. "503, can you confirm that those were your Mk-82s?"

The best we could manage in reply was, "Roger, Lancelin, 503 still has no spots."

"503, Lancelin. Look off range, mate. Your bombs are four miles from the target and appear to have detonated across the local highway. We're going to have to close the range and go inspect for casualties."

We circled around and managed to catch the 12 spots as they dissipated. A closer inspection revealed 12 large craters,

one of which had indeed taken out a two-lane asphalt highway. Like most naval aviators in times of intense personal crises (translate: screw-ups), our dialogue in the cockpit reverted to mostly four-letter words.

Just when we thought things couldn't get much worse, the A-7s piped up with, "Lancelin, say your delay estimate." The target's specific response escapes me, but it was sufficient to send our air wing buddies off in search of a place to jettison 24 Mk-82s before heading back to the ship. We hung around for a while, but had to leave in short order ourselves.

The Australians' closing comment has stuck with me. "G'day, 503, we'll be filing our report with your ship this afternoon."

The next couple of days were unpleasant for us but really could have been a lot worse. The computer in 603 had interpreted the pilot's attack command as a BN attack command, a different button which sets the computer up to release the weapons after 38 degrees of nose-up travel in a general loft maneuver instead of the down-the-throat pilot-boresight attack. Had we been more observant of our computer symbology on the gunsight and VDI (vertical display indicator), there were some cues which would have told us something was wrong. Either of us could have also stepped the computer out of attack or simply turned the Master Arm off to inhibit release.

The Australians were very forgiving. It was a very remote location and it was only a secondary road. The exercise continued the next day and there were no legal ramifications. CAG was not as nice. After a very unpleasant half-hour in his office with our CO explaining all the circumstances, he asked us if we would "volunteer" to spend the next five days on the ship in a no-fly status (the last two of which would be in-port Perth). We agreed this was a great idea.

Although this incident happened 13 years ago, it's perhaps even more significant today because of our current fiscal climate. Our limited live-ordnance training demands the utmost caution. No live-ordnance hop should ever be considered "typical." Don't ever let yourself get rushed into being further behind your aircraft.

Counter the unexpected with better preflight preparation. Plan on an earlier brief to include TACMAN and an analysis of where the airplane's bombs will hit.

Situational awareness is a common term to describe many different phases of flight. Delivery of live ordnance happens so infrequently that you will lack situational awareness.

In our case, we should have briefed "Our primary delivery will be a 40-degree dive, 7,500 feet commit, pilot boresight attack. The manual backup will be a 5,600-foot pickle. Before the nose approaches the horizon the Master Arm's coming off."

When was the last time you delivered live ordnance? ◀

Cdr. Rogers is the XO of VA-145.



Left to right: Cpl. N.G. Poulos, USMC; Capt. M.C. Rodrick, USMC; LCpl. S.C. Hughes, USMC; Capt. J.L. Gill, USMC

Capt. M.C. Rodrick, USMC
 Capt. J.L. Gill, USMC
 Cpl. N.G. Poulos, USMC
 LCpl. S.C. Hughes, USMC
 HMM(C)-166

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The section of CH-53Es launched from USS *Okinawa* (LPH-3) to practice formation TAC turns. Immediately after rolling out of a turn at 250 feet AGL and 140 knots, the crew in the lead aircraft felt a violent jolt, followed by severe vertical vibrations as the nose pitched down.

At the controls, Capt. Gill (copilot) applied back cyclic to reduce airspeed and level the aircraft. Capt. Rodrick (HAC) then took control and called, "Mayday!"

After the helicopter leveled off at 75-100 feet, Capt. Rodrick reduced airspeed to 80 knots. At this speed, however, the vertical vibrations increased, and he slowed to 50 knots, which reduced the vibrations to an acceptable level. Even at 50 knots, the vibrations caused the entire caution panel to illuminate and all gauges to fluctuate; some dials actually shook loose from their connections and fell out of the

panel.

Both the fuel flow for the No. 3 engine as well as the pilot's No. 3 engine torque indicated zero, and Capt. Rodrick became concerned that the No. 3 engine had failed.

Capt. Gill checked all engine instruments and assured the HAC that all three engines were operating normally. Still unsure of the cause of the vibrations, Capt. Rodrick told his crew that if the situation got worse, he would ditch. He also told Cpl. Poulos (crew chief) and LCpl. Hughes (first mechanic) to prepare for ditching.

Capt. Rodrick's wingman called to say that he thought he had seen something fly off the stricken helo's rotors. Dash 2 also said that he could see the lead's tail pylon flexing.

Capt. Rodrick discovered that he could not keep the collective from driving full up, so both pilots handled the controls to minimize pitch on the

rotor blades.

When the CH-53 was 1-2 miles from *Okinawa*, the tower cleared Capt. Rodrick to land anywhere from spots 4 to 7. Both pilots agreed that a right-seat landing should be made and, therefore, Capt. Gill would take primary control. The HAC would stay on the controls for help.

After seeing how well they could control the hover, the crew set down on spot 7. The vibrations lessened as the collective was lowered full down.

When the crew exited the helicopter, they found that one tail-rotor blade had completely delaminated from the root-fairing cap to approximately nine inches from the tip cap.

Lt. Glen K. Hansen
 Lt. John W. Davison III
 VA-95

On a return cross-country flight from southern California, while on autopilot, Lizard 502's crew felt a violent, uncommanded movement in the control system, along with a loss of the flight-hydraulic system.

Lt. Hansen (pilot) and Lt. Davison (BN) disconnected the autopilot, declared an emergency, and pointed the aircraft toward the nearest divert field, 28 miles away.

After dumping to landing weight, Lt. Hansen began a visual approach. At 18 miles, he lowered the flaps and slats by backup methods, then slowed to the speed at which he could blow down the gear. All three gear indicators barberpoled. A cross-reference confirmed that all gear were unsafe. As the A-6 flew by, the tower reported that the nosegear was down, but that both mainmounts were up.

Lt. Hansen applied positive and negative G, getting a down-and-locked indication for the nosegear. The main gear remained unsafe, however.

Lt. Davison told the tower that they would make a main-gear-up approach

BRAVO ZULU

to a field arrestment, and asked for a crash crew. At an unfamiliar field, with no LSO available, Lt. Hansen made a slow, flared approach to the gear, with Lt. Davison providing backup calls on airspeed, VSI and lineup. As the aircraft settled into the gear on the centerline drop tank and the nosegear, Lt. Hansen secured both engines.

As the Intruder slid down the runway, the centerline tank separated from the aircraft. Fuel ignited behind the plane. Hearing the tower's report of fire, Lt. Davison jettisoned the canopy, and he and Lt. Hansen egressed off the port wing as the crash crew extinguished the fire.

Damage was limited to the centerline station, doppler radome, nosegear, port-station MER and port flap. An AMB is investigating the cause of the system failures.



Left to right: Lt. John C. Ring, Cdr. Stefan L. Smolski, Lt. David R. Greer, Ltjg. Daniel R. Bailey, Lt. Glen C. Ackermann, LCdr. Carl M. June (not pictured)

Cdr. Stefan Smolski
LCdr. Carl M. June
Lt. Glen C. Ackermann
Lt. David R. Greer
Lt. John C. Ring
Ltjg. Daniel R. Bailey
VAW-123

Screwtop 603 was returning from a night AEW mission in the Arabian Gulf. At 1,200 feet and six miles behind the ship, Lt. Ackermann (CAPC) began the landing checklist. He immediately noticed that the nosegear showed unsafe and that there was a light in the gear handle. With Ltjg. Bailey (copilot) coordinating with approach control, Lt. Ackermann climbed to 2,000 feet overhead the ship and began NATOPS emergency procedures.

It soon became obvious that the gear would not show three-down-and-locked. The Air Boss was also reluctant to recover a gear-up Hummer. Lt. Ackermann climbed to 4,000 feet and turned toward the bingo field so that another aircraft could inspect Screwtop 603.

Cdr. Smolski (ACO), Lt. Greer (mission commander) and Lt. Ring (RO) coordinated with ATC and the bingo field. In CATCC, the squadron rep, LCdr. June, worked with maintenance control for ideas.

After the second aircraft confirmed

that the E-2's nosegear was up and that the gear doors were open, Lt. Ackermann binged to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. En route, Cdr. Smolski worked with Dhahran Approach while Lt. Greer spoke to Dhahran Tower, asking the crew to rig the arresting gear and to have emergency vehicles standing by.

The crew reviewed landing with the nosegear up and discussed emergency exit procedures.

At 20 miles, following a suggestion from LCdr. June and maintenance personnel, Lt. Ackermann tried one last time to lower the nosegear. He slapped the gear handle down while pulling positive, then negative, Gs. This maneuver worked and at 15 miles, all three gear were showing down and locked.

Lt. Ackermann could not get a visual inspection to check the gear, however, and with fuel running low and the status of the field's arresting gear unknown, he made a very soft, slow normal-field landing. After taxiing clear of the runway, the crew pinned all three mounts.

Postflight investigation showed that the starboard connecting link for the nosegear door had broken because of rivet wear. The link had lodged against the nosegear strut, preventing it from extending.



Left to right: Lt. John W. Davison III, Lt. Glen K. Hansen



It Takes Two

I was crewed with a CAT II major whose last trap had been in A-4s back in 1977 when he first earned his wings. The late March weather off southern California was the same as always. The marine layer loomed off the coast, making even moonlit nights dark as the ace of spades underneath the overcast, which had bottoms at 800 feet.

We had completed our day qualifications and were working on our second night period. We made our gaggle and individual crew briefs. We found our jet on the roof, preflighted and launched. Departure told us to clean up and contact marshal for our obligatory 20 minutes of "comfort time." Personally, I think "comfort time" is having a slice of pizza in the dirty shirt wardroom *after* we shut down, but off we went to hold for a while.

Marshal called, "99 Primary divert NAS Miramar. Pigeons bear 035 for 100, bingo fuels as follows: F-14, 3.3..."

A quick check of the TACAN and my system revealed that marshal's information was correct and the PCL confirmed their calculation of bingo fuel.

We pushed on time 500 pounds above our max trap of 6.0, leveled at 1,200 feet, dirtied up at 10 miles, slowed to on-speed at 6 DME. At two miles, we broke out at 800 feet just as advertised. A minute later we were safe on deck, with an (OK) 4-wire and 5.9 remaining. We had plenty of gas for another trip around the pattern.

Turning downwind after our climbout, the radio chattered with the LSO's voice as he coaxed pilots out of the black sky. We also heard the all-too-frequent, "Bolter, bolter, bolter!"

At 12 miles, approach finally turned us inbound.

"Gee, the pattern is really stretched out tonight!" I said. This pass didn't go like our first, and we bolted with 4.9 remaining. No sweat, plenty for another stab at it.

In the crosswind turn, approach had some bad news.

"99, NAS Miramar is closed for weather. New primary divert is NAF El Centro. Pigeons bear 065 for 200. New bingo fuels to follow. A-6, 4.1..."

The major raised the gear to save every drop of fuel. We agreed that this would be close as I called abeam with 4.7, particularly if they drove us out

Now
we were
200
pounds
below
bingo,
but we
were on
our way
once
again.

to Bingo *Cha-Cha-Cha*

By Lt. Ernest W. Martin

to 12 miles again. At 10 miles, downwind, we pimped CATCC with a "State 4.4" call. They didn't answer and we again turned in at 12 miles.

I was starting to squirm now, never having been in a true bingo situation before and not wanting tonight to be the first.

"Four point two, 10 miles to go," I muttered, "Come on fuel gauge, don't fail me now." But the needle kept creeping down until, finally, at six miles, we told approach we were bingo, state 4.1 and started our climb toward El Centro.

Approach called, "Negative, 826, continue the approach."

What? We were passing 2,800 feet with the flaps and slats up, 60 degrees off final bearing. The major pulled the power back and made a big play to get back on final bearing. I really wanted to get aboard, so I did not protest. Twenty seconds later, approach called again.

"826, say state."

"826, 3.9."

"Roger 826, your signal is bingo, clean up and climb."

Great. Now we were 200 pounds below bingo, but we were on our way once again.

Our flight to our divert went smoothly, aided by the fact that an F/A-18 and another A-6 had already blazed this trail a few minutes ahead of us. We landed with 1.3, low fuel and oxygen caution lights.

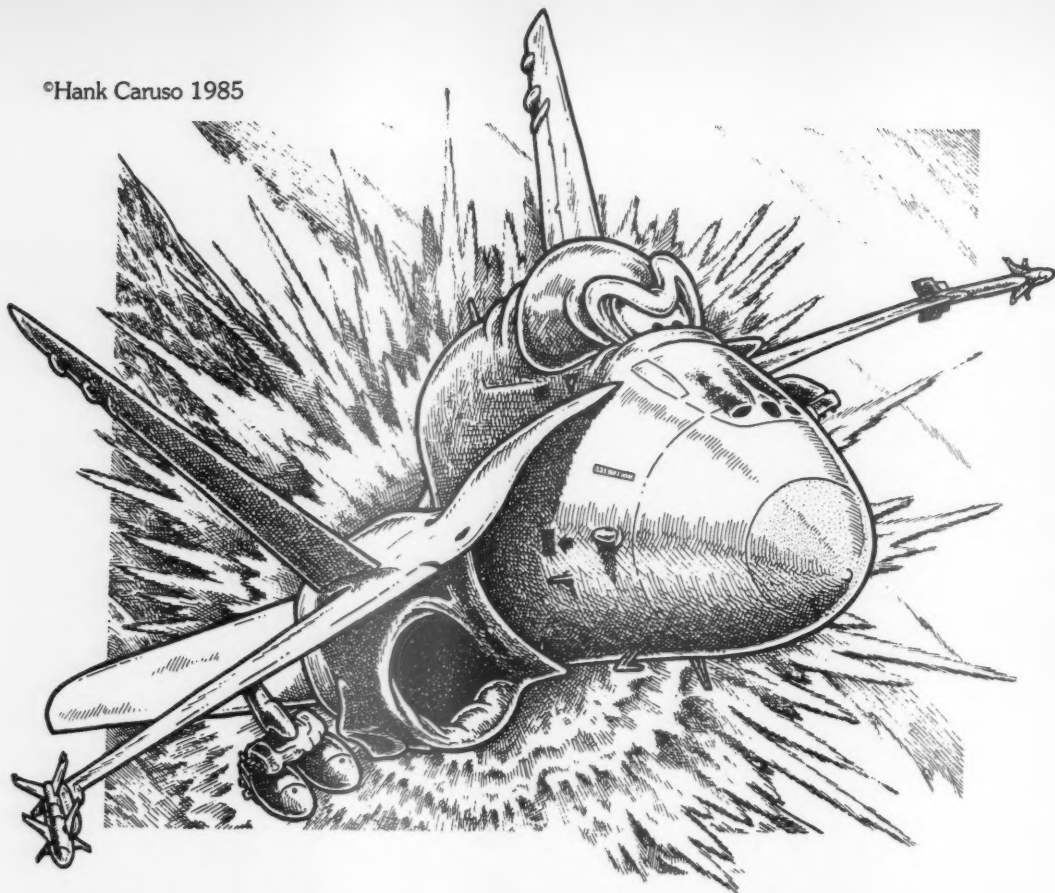
Don't hint around the facts. Use terms like "bingo plus one," or "bingo on the ball." This will give air ops a couple of minutes to work the problem.

Don't let controllers talk you into something you don't want to do, or worse, something you do want to do, but shouldn't. We tentatively made up our minds to bingo but then let approach override our decision. We continued and if we hadn't received the second bingo call we would have allowed ourselves to get into an emergency fuel situation. If we had bolted we may not have made it to El Centro.

Be prepared to go when you reach your numbers and stick with your decision. All the preflight planning in the world is useless if you are not prepared to execute your emergency plans.

Lt. Martin is a BN with VA-145.

25



26

A Hornet Looks at the Big One-Oh

By N.A. Hornet, as told to Lt. Tom Ganse

Dudes! When Ol' Man Corsair told his story five years ago ("A Corsair Looks at Twenty," September '86) I figured he was just a crotchety old guy. Man, I knew with *my* awesome high-tech wizardry, there was no way I'd have to worry about Bozo the Pilot or bogus maintenance. Now I've passed the big One-Oh, and no joke, the old guy wasn't lyin'! I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own sensors.

Check out these gems:

- At least two pilots have departed controlled flight after securing an engine. They never regained control.
- Pilots have flown into the water.
- Pilots have flown into the ground.

- Pilots didn't look where they were going and ran over their wingman and flight leaders.

- Pilots have hit each other while taking pictures of themselves.

- Pilots have landed a little short of the rounddown.

- Pilots have ejected from airplanes that keep on flying.

What about these stats?

- In the last 10 years, Hornet drivers have hit the ramp three times, A-6 drivers haven't.

- Six F/A-18 Class A mishaps were forecast for calendar year 1991. We lost over twice that many. (14 Class A mishaps)

— Last year we lost almost as many Hornets as all carrier-based planes combined. (11 destroyed F/A-18s. 13 destroyed F-14s, A-6s, E-2s, S-3s.)

— Two-thirds of last year's Class A mishaps were determined to be pilot error. (14 total, 9 pilot error)

So what are we talkin here, Ace? Am I too hot to handle? Too high-tech? Is the mission too tough? No way! You guys aren't trashing Hornets rockin' from air-to-ground to air-to air, taking a Fox and switching back to air-to-ground to launch your HARM, or designating your iron-bomb target and poppin' up from low level. You're doing it because you don't know how to fly the ball or don't follow NATOPS. You go up there turnin' and burnin' and run into each other. Sometimes you just bite off more than you can chew. Hey, if a machine like me can figure out my limits, why can't you highly trained and educated college boys figure out yours?

I was pretty naive five years ago but a lot has happened since then. I've picked up a lot of green ink recently and it seems to me like you're my major danger. After all, the bad guys only got one. In 1991, you guys lost 14*. Bogus!

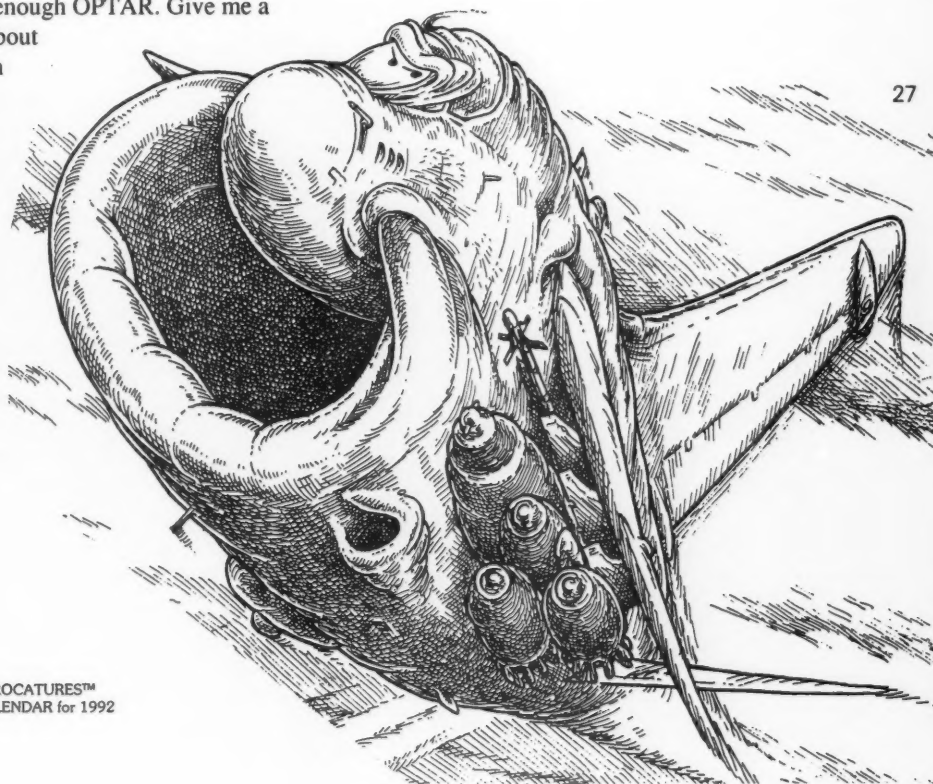
Hey man, I've heard all the sob stories about having too much paperwork and not enough OPTAR. Give me a break! There's nothing new about that. The mishap rate has been declining under those conditions for at least 15 years. If you don't have the time and money to train like you used to then I guess you need to train a little smarter. You guys have never had the capability to introduce and handle realistic emergencies like you can in my simulators. Do you do it? How about kicking those stashed ensigns out of the box and showin' em how a fleet pilot does it.

How many times do you go out and practice with degraded capabilities — you know, the self-induced kind? Do you practice no HUD, no platform, or single-engine work during your bounce periods or GCAs? How about combined emergencies? Wouldn't you rather know the symptoms before you see 'em for real? Wouldn't you rather face some heinous problem with the confidence that you can handle it because you've done it before?

So what's the jam, man. You tell me. I think Ol' Man Corsair pegged it. You guys are dangerous. What I don't understand is, I'm not telling you anything new. Harley said it five years ago. Lots of other dudes been sayin it long before that. What's it gonna take? I think you'd best suck it up and get back to the basics. Fly the ball. Look outside. Know your limits as well as mine. Read the big blue sleeping pill!

Lt. Ganse flies Hornets with VFA-113.

**Ed. note — During Desert Storm there were two F/A-18 Class A mishaps. There was one loss to enemy action (not included in the total).*



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CALENDAR for 1992

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By Lt. William W. Hiscock

Stall COD

AS I approached the break, I was about to bring my 100-day trapless spell to an end. One-half mile ahead of the ship, the Boss said, "Password, you're clear to break." I had intended to take it up to two miles but decided that I was well past the bow and shouldn't have any problems slowing down by the 180. I hadn't considered the effect that the 35-45-knot winds would have on my aircraft.

I broke at three-quarters of a mile and at the 180, I was still 40 knots above approach speed. By the 135, my airspeed had dropped to within two knots of our anticipated approach speed. AOA indicated two units fast. I brought the malfunction to my copilot's attention and said that I was going to continue the approach at 110 knots.

As we approached the 45, it became apparent that I had compounded the problem by setting up for a low, angling start. With these winds, I needed considerable power to regain the glideslope. I also needed a coordinated right-wing dip to drive us over the centerline.

As I worked to bring the glideslope and centerline within reasonable limits, my copilot said, "Airspeed is good but I feel sort of cocked up." I felt the same, but since my airspeed indicator was telling me something different, I pressed on.

The ball rose to meet the datum lights and I pulled

power to try to avoid climbing. By now I was on centerline and I was beginning to feel that I could save the pass.

My copilot called the ball and told paddles about our stuck AOA.

"Roger, Greyhound," the LSO replied, "you look a little slow."

"OK," I thought, "a little nose down with some power to hold the glideslope and we're in there." Then it happened. The right wing abruptly stopped flying and fell toward the water!

I responded automatically. I let the nose fall through (actually, I stuffed it), applied full power and raised the gear. Sheer momentum carried us downward until airspeed reached 130 knots. At this time, avoiding the back of the ship became a priority and we took it up the left side. After a pilot swap and a wide, deep, slightly fast approach, we trapped.

By an uncomfortably small margin, a potential catastrophe became a great learning experience, although the lessons weren't new. Approach-turn stalls have happened before. That's why we practice them at altitude. If I had tried to hold the right wing up with aileron, a cross-controlled departure would have almost certainly occurred. The fact that I could resist the urge is a testament to my training. But why was my situational awareness so far gone that I had to use the training in the first place?

Part of my lack of SA can be attributed to the fact that I hadn't been in this situation for nearly four months. More familiarity with the proper sight picture would have improved my pattern work, making such large corrections at the start unnecessary.

Making a less aggressive break might have also helped. We would have more time to evaluate the situation. We would have told paddles about the problem earlier and he would have started talking to us sooner. Paddles will avoid "flying the airplane for you" unless you tell them you need help.

The COD is not a sportscar and I tried a varsity correction in less than ideal conditions. Under normal circumstances, I could have done it, but the combination of high winds, a malfunctioning flight instrument, and an enthusiastic break were enough to put me well behind my aircraft. The power corrections I made were just too great and too aggressive for the situation.

When things in the cockpit don't look or feel right, and things don't seem to be going your way, there's nothing wrong in planning your approach to give yourself more room to breathe or break it off. It beats breaking your neck—and your airplane—any day.

Lt. Hiscock flies with VRC-30.



PH1 Michael D.P. Flynn



See That Hole in the Deck? Grab It!

By LCdr. David L. Kennedy

I had recently reported for duty as a catapult officer for my second sea tour. I stood scant feet from roaring jet engines. JP-5 from venting drop tanks sprayed me as tankers blasted down the tracks. I got used to having Sidewinder fins (among other things) pass mere inches above my head.

With only two aircraft remaining to launch from the waist, my instructor shooter told me to head back to the arresting gear platform to prepare for the next recovery, which would begin seconds after this last launch. Shouting an acknowledgement at the top of my lungs, I walked toward the arresting gear deck-edge station. This late in the launch, there were no taxiing aircraft to avoid and no huffers racing to and fro along the foul line. Everything was calm and safe for the time being.

The final two aircraft to be launched when I left the waist were F-14s. On *Forrestal*-class carriers, Tomcats are normally launched on cat 4, so that their exhaust goes safely over the port side of the ship. The jet blast deflector behind cat 3 on these carriers is a Mk 6, Mod 3 JBD, and is not tall enough to properly deflect an F-14's exhaust. These fighters can be launched in afterburner from cat 3 with the JBD down and with the captain's permission.

As I had made my circuit of the fantail area I failed to notice that the two remaining aircraft had been loaded on catapults 3 and 4 and were ready to be launched in order. The catapult officer gave the signal to take tension on cat 3.

As I heard the F-14 roar to MRT, I knew instantly that I was in the wrong place. With those cat-like reflexes that had saved me from disaster so many times before, I cut to my right and began heading across the deck to the safety of the starboard catwalk.

In the F-14 community, we love to point out the shortcomings of our Pratt & Whitney TF-30 engines. Their stall margin is low, they are incredibly prone to FODing and, most of all, they are severely underpowered. However, I will never call the TF-30 underpowered again. I now have a new respect for this engine.

As I headed directly to starboard, my track across the deck was pitiful. I was moving nearly straight aft toward the rounddown. I had thought that a quick jaunt of perhaps 10 steps would have me clear of the jet exhaust, but after just five I could see that there was no way I would reach the catwalk. If I continued to run, I would be swimming in no time. I was beaten in two dimensions, so I opted for the third: I hit the deck.

It was then that I met my personal padeye. (On the deck of this class of carrier, there are 4,157 padeyes. That is nearly enough for each man onboard to have his own.) As soon as I reached the deck, I grabbed the nearest padeye and held on with all my might. This was a good thing, for even though the Air Boss had just spotted me (he actually saw a crumpled heap lying between the wires and only assumed it was a human), I was far from safe.

The shooter had seen me as well and immediately knew he had two choices. He decided against suspending, because he figured he could have the Tomcat airborne and away from me in less time than it would take to go through suspend procedures.

I got out of the frying pan and into the fire as he gave the Tomcat pilot the signal for afterburner. I hunched over, trying to shield the exposed portion of the back of my neck, still clinging to the padeye and staring at my gloved knuckles. Not until I had gotten a good first-degree burn did the Tomcat leap away from the deck and allow cool, calm air to surround me. I got up quickly and headed for the foul line, hoping to lose myself in any nearby group and avoid being recognized. Of course, that was impossible, and I got to make that long lonely climb up to the 0-9 level for an audience with the Boss.

Of course, mine was not the only mistake made that night. My instructor should never have told me to head back into the landing area when a JBD-down launch was imminent. With cat 3's JBD down, we should have been more careful to make sure that the deck was clear aft of the catapult, all the way to the fantail.

Now, we station directors between the foul line and the centerline, and the shooter looks for thumbs-up (up yellow wands, at night) before he gives the hook-up signal.

The biggest mistake of the evening, however, was mine. We can look out for each other on the flight deck, but the person most directly responsible for my safety is me. ◀

LCdr. Kennedy, a former shooter on USS *Independence* (CV-62), now flies with VF-21.

For another story by an aviator who saved himself by grabbing a padeye, see "The Is My Padeye" (January 1985).—Ed.



SAR

for Beginners

By Cdr. R.L. Welch

It's a sunny day in the Caribbean and we're flying multiple-ship's service sorties. The carrier is controlling fighters while raiders from various communities – including civilian aircraft – are trying to penetrate the ship's defenses. ROE is "intercept only," so the hop goes slowly.

Finally, the raid is finished and the fighters are released for other missions. The flight lead decides to take his nugget wingman on his first practice plugs from a KC-130. En route, over the frequency for range entry-exit control, one of the returning raiders calls, "Control, Phantom 11 declaring an emergency. I have a flight-control malfunction."

The Hornet lead, selectively listening to his radio, ignores this transmission. After all, it doesn't involve his wingman, himself or the tanker. While they keep looking for the Herc, Phantom 11 mistakenly makes an ICS call over his UHF.

"Get out! Get out! I can't control it!"

This frantic call gets the Hornet lead's attention, but he still has not put the pieces together. Control doesn't say anything. An E-2, which had helped control the original raid and is fortunately still monitoring control, asks, "Control, is there an aircraft in the water?" Silence.

Then, "Affirmative." Silence, again.

"Well," the E-2 asks, "are you going to initiate a SAR?"

"Affirmative." Silence.

It finally dawns on the Hornet lead that no one has taken charge of this rapidly developing situation.

"Control, Winder 04, flight of two Hornets. We're available if necessary."

"Roger, Winder 04," Control responds, "vector to Rosey Roads 014-degree radial, 20 miles. Search for survivors."

TACAIR drivers, ask yourselves, are you ready to assume control of a real SAR as on-scene commander? You should always cover SARs during your preflight briefs.

Winder 04 starts digging into his "brain-book checklist." He knows he stored material there from his training days in VA-122 more than 10 years ago. It's a *combat-SAR* checklist, but many items still apply. The main thing he remembers was *not* to get himself or his wingman into an emergency while searching for survivors or while acting as on-scene commander.

"Winder 04, outbound on the 014-degree radial, 15 miles." Two minutes later, 10 miles from the broadcast splash position, he sees a slick, then dye markers, then two happy survivors. Time to go to work. Use the checklist. Set up your own overhead pattern and bingo fuel. Most importantly, take charge of communications, additional SAR assets, and the game plan.

The checklist below is what helped Winder 04. The items with asterisks can be applied in combat. If all goes well, the survivors will be thanking you at the club that night. In this case, the crew of Phantom 11 was in the hospital within an hour. ◀

Cdr. Welch is the XO of VMFAT-101. He flew F/A-18s with VFA-86.

On-Scene Commander Checklist

I. Identification

1. Number of survivors
2. Check authentication*
3. Establish order of communication
4. Determine injuries
5. Determine enemy activity*
6. Check all assets' on-station time, ordnance, etc.

II. Location

1. Determine signal devices
2. Request beeper for homing.
3. Request general terrain description
4. Request survivor give vectors to his position
5. Pinpoint each survivor's location

III. Sanitation*

1. Note enemy positions*
2. Neutralize all enemy positions*
3. Determine helo ingress-egress-emergency routes and sanitize*

IV. Recovery

A. Brief helo and remainder of task force:

1. Number and physical condition of survivor(s)
2. Distance to survivor(s) from "feet wet"
3. Describe terrain
4. Pinpoint survivor(s)' location
5. Altitude of recovery area
6. Windspeed and direction
7. Describe survivor(s)' signal device(s)
8. Known or suspected enemy activity*
9. Describe ingress-egress-emergency routes
10. Emergency safe landing area

B. Direct survivor(s) to:

1. Prepare and ignite smokes
2. Call out threatening enemy positions*
3. Vector helo if necessary
4. Retain helmet for recovery

*For combat SAR only

The School of Hard Knocks Graduates Another

By Lt. Kurt Weidman

After a particularly long at-sea-period, our air wing's pilots were starting to lose some of their sharpness behind the boat. The increase in average to below average passes (A.K.A. Mid-cruise Blues) was probably the result of minimum liberty, sun and fun.

The last night recovery prior to our first port call had started out with an ugly bolter. So much for the cherry recovery. Sorry Boss. Now on our toes, we thought we were ready for anything.

"202, Tomcat ball, 5.6", the RIO called. The Tomcat was high and going higher.

"Roger ball", responded the LSO. The pilot then made a major correction to center the ball.

32 "Power back on", urged paddles. The jet was now obviously underpowered and rapidly approaching the glideslope.

"Power." He was now below the glideslope.

"Power!" One last attempt to get a response from the pilot.

"WAVE-OFF, WAVE-OFF, POWER, POWER!"

The pilot overrotated on the wave-off which sent the aircraft even lower.

"WAVE-OFF, BURNER, BURNER!"

Crouched on the platform, wide-eyed, jaw on the ground, and dumbfounded, I thought, "He's gonna' hit the ramp". Every LSO on the platform later confessed to having the same thought.

The jet did manage to stay off the ramp. It had gone so low that it narrowly missed the ramp on the way back up. As close as it was, I am convinced that nugget would have put himself, the RIO, and the jet right into the spud locker without the calls from paddles.

After my knees stopped shaking, I realized just how crucial the LSO is to a safe landing evolution. As an LSO you assume a tremendous responsibility when you pick up the pickle.

Just because a team leader or CAG paddles is standing behind you with a pickle in his hands doesn't mean you can rely on him to make the critical call or wave-off. You may see something that he doesn't. Don't cut your-

self out of the loop in the tough situations, you are responsible for the safe recovery of an aircraft.

You are also responsible for the expeditious recovery of aircraft. That statement sometimes seems contrary to the idea of a safe recovery. A fine line is drawn to maintain the two.

Too conservative will produce low boarding rates and maximum pilot frustration. Too expeditious will result in taking trash and undoubtedly an increased mishap rate. Every LSO needs to keep an internal series of checks to maintain that balance.

I love my job as paddles. If you're a soon-to-be or new paddles here is a word of caution. LSOs are given one of the biggest responsibilities for a junior officer. Your guard cannot come down for one second, regardless of how smooth the recovery is going.

Don't learn this lesson the way I did. Keep yourself in line and keep'em off the ramp.

Lt. Weidman is a pilot with VAW-121.



Mixing Marshals Check Your Six... I Mean Twelve!

By Lt. Russ Whitney

I checked in with marshal with my student pilot's name and copied down our radial and DME. We had to circle around to the south of the carrier, so I recommended we keep a sharp lookout for other aircraft also joining the stack. We were the first to report in and I was fairly certain that the way was clear ahead of us, but nonetheless kept my guard up.

We were scheduled for the first night overhead of the FRS CQ so I knew that approach would not be gearing up until the sun fell below the horizon. Securely established at my assigned marshal point, I was content to listen as the rest of the aircraft gathered above us awaiting for what was going to be a murky night.

As we passed through one turn in holding I surveyed the area and found two Vikings above us, mother at 22 miles and surprisingly another mother right below us! She was steaming pretty hard downwind (in the general direction of San Diego) with her flight deck clear. We had been briefed that a second carrier would be somewhere in the area, but no one had said that it would be near our boat. Beaver hadn't notified us of any hot areas associated with the second CV, so it was a fair assumption that she was not conducting flight ops.

Several years in the fleet had taught me to be cautious and keep a heads-up attitude for dangerous situations and

then do something about it if it arose. I deliberated on the pros and cons of calling marshal. If they already knew about the other ship's position (as they assuredly did, considering all the modern radar and communications crammed into air ops) then I would look foolish stating the obvious to those who should know. On the other hand, if they didn't, what harm would be done? I made the radio call and got a "Roger, 721, the other player is secured from flight ops."

My Samaritan duties were over and I spent the next couple minutes trying to convince my student that I had done the prudent thing.

The next thing I saw was the underbelly of an S-3 filling my windscreen as it passed less than a hundred feet above our canopy. There was no time for a traffic call, no time for a jink away to avoid the on-coming aircraft, only time to utter a one-word expletive.

My immediate reaction was to get us away from the situation and then figure out who had just blown by us and why. My call to marshal earned a "Roger, standby" and a call on tactical confirmed it wasn't one of my squadronmates. That left only two alternatives. The aircraft was in the Case I stack over the second carrier and my carrier had placed us in a Case III stack over the same carrier. The second possibility was that the aircraft was flying around with total indifference to both carriers. Not happy with either explanation, I pimped marshal again and much to my relief, they started sending all aircraft to a new marshal 30 radials to the south.

My pilot wasn't shaken by the close call. I guess the view from his side of the cockpit didn't include the plane captain's name stenciled on the nose gear doors.

Lt. Whitney is an instructor with VS-41.

CWO2 Tony Alleyne

I spent the next couple minutes trying to convince my student that I had done the prudent thing.





don't just

TALK

TALK

TALK

TALK

TALK...

Do something about hazards!

COMMUNICATE!

